

The Mint of the United States,

AT

PHILADELPHIA, PENN.,

Assay Department, March 3^d, 1882

Sir:

In my letter of the 18th Jan., I found it necessary to allude to certain ambiguities and deficiencies in our tariff, which keep us in continual doubt as to whether we are always making the proper charges. I would thank you therefore to refer the matter to the Director for specific instructions upon the following points.

First.— If a gold deposit of U.S. or Foreign Coin assaying 895 fine, is to be charged "only on the number of ounces required to be refined to raise the whole to Standard," is the additional charge of 100 cents (or to of a %) to be imposed? It does not part, it is not as a whole refined, and the "additional" is required only on deposits that do require parting or refining. Being only in a small fraction refined, the rule may be construed either way. Thus far I have omitted the "additional" in these cases.

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Second - The paragraph on page 6 of the "Instructions &c" which reads - "For gold coin or standard gold bars the rate per ounce charged will be imposed only on the number of ounces required to be refined to raise the whole to standard," - is open to more than one interpretation. Does it mean, for a deposit of gold coin &c, or for a deposit of any bullion "for gold coin &c"? Logically, the former is the more likely, being appended to the regular table for parting as though both charges might be imposed. Under the tariff of 1874 there was no mistake, for it was specified as referring only to coppery gold without silver. Our own old gold as well as foreign coin is partible; and standard bars may be made of such bullion by partial refining. The question is, to what kind of bullion does this paragraph refer, and does it preclude other charges?

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Again, in a deposit of brittle gold ^{below standard,} without silver alloy, "for coin or standard bars" the standard might be reached without sufficient toughening; and the process, if continued as long as necessary, would raise the title above standard. As I understand it, this is not permitted by the letter of the Regulation - unless the paragraph is intended to apply only to bullion which does not need toughening and will not part.

Third:- In the phrase "raise the whole to Standard" what is the import of the word "standard"? Is a gold deposit at 899, or silver at 897 to be regarded as below standard and subject to the raising charge? Practically the range of tolerance is the legal standard. At the same time, the Mint would not receive either of these without the partial refining necessary to raise them to the theoretical standard of 900.

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If the Mint may issue coin at 899 and 897 it must take it back again as bullion when fit for coinage; at least, I have so regarded it.

Fourth — Is the gold in a Silver Purchase subject to the "additional charge of 100 cents &c."? A "Silver Purchase" is excepted. But is the gold (which often exceeds the silver in value) a silver purchase? The decision of the Weigh Clerk, as to whether the bullion shall go as gold or silver, is all that determines the difference in the costs. The same bullion may with propriety be taken either way. Under the Regulations, I have had to treat such cases, gold and all, as a Silver Purchase, and omit the additional charge.

Thus far, I have asked for instructions absolutely necessary for our guidance in cases daily occurring.

I now respectfully venture to go a step further

The Mint of the United States,
At Philadelphia, Penn.,
Assay Department,
March 3, 1882

Sir:

In my letter of the 18th Jan., I found it necessary to allude to certain ambiguities and deficiencies on our tariff, which keep us in continual doubt as to whether we are always making the proper charges. I would thank you therefore to refer the matter to the Director for specific instructions upon the following points.

First. – If a gold deposit of U.S. of Foreign Coin assaying 895 fine, is to be charged “only on the number of ounces required to be refined to raise the whole to Standard”, is the additional charge of 100 cents (or 1/10 of a ¢ &c.) to be imposed? It does not part, it is not as a whole refined, and the “additional” is required only on deposits that do require parting or refining. Being only in a small fraction refined, the rule may be construed either way. Thus far I have omitted the “additional” in the cases.

Second – The paragraph on page 6 of the “Instructions &” which reads – “For gold coin or standard gold bars the rate per ounce charged will be imposed only on the number of ounces required to be refined to raise the whole to standard”, - is open to more than one interpretation. Does it mean, for a deposit of gold coin &c., or for a deposit of any bullion “for gold coins &c.”? Logically, the former is the more likely, being appended to the regular table for parting as though both charges might be imposed. Under the tariff of 1874 there was no mistake, for it was specified as referring only to coppery gold without silver. Our own old gold as well as foreign coin is partible; and standard bars may be made of such bullion by partial refining. The question is, to what kind of bullion does this paragraph refer, and does it preclude other charges?

Again, in deposit of brittle gold below standard, without silver alloy, “for coin or standard bars” the standard might be reached without sufficient toughening; and the process, if continued as long as necessary, would raise the title above standard. As I understand it, this is not permitted by the letter of the Regulation – unless the paragraph is intended to apply only to bullion which does not need toughening and will not part.

Third – In the phrase “raise the whole to standard” what is the import of the word “standard”? Is a gold deposit at 899, or silver at 897 to be regarded as below standard and subject to the raising charge?

Practically the range of tolerance is the legal standard. At the same time, the Mint would not recoin either of these without the partial refining necessary to raise them to the theoretical standard of 900. If the Mint may issue coin at 899 and 897 it must take it back again as bullion when fit for coinage; at least, I have so regarded it.

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